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AUTHOR Drahmann, Theodore
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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies and attempts to clarify the major roles of a Catholic school principal, with references to many Christian heroes and heroines as examples. Those roles include teacher, teacher of teachers, financier, one who deals with boards of education and parent organizations, one who works with church authorities and religious orders, one who operates under laws, evaluator, and marketing specialist. In summary, Saint Paul should be a model for this position, for he was effective in all of these areas. The presentation concludes with the following practical advice for balancing all these roles: plan well, take advantage of all the helps available, share the administrative burdens, and seize every opportunity to communicate what the school has done. (DCS)

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NCEA Convention - April 9, 1985

The Many-Splendored Role of Catholic School Principals

Brother Theodore Drahmann FSC

President

Christian Brothers College

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin my presentation to you today with two brief anecdotes, somewhat related. Both are related, however, to our time which may quite aptly be termed the "Poster Age".

Some years ago I visited for a few days in the home of my brother and his family in California. While there I occupied my teen age niece's bedroom, while she had to make do sleeping on the sofa in the family room. Every morning when I awakened and opened my eyes to the California sunshine which was flooding the room, the first sight that greeted my eyes were two giant more than-life-size posters of her current heart throbs: Robert Redford and Tom Selleck! What a beginning for her day, each day - and for mine!

Some time later, I was speaking to a group of Catholic school principals--perhaps some of you may have been there - endeavoring to make their role as religious leader attainable and manageable. My thesis was simple: just be another Christ. And I developed in my talk a description of 4 posters of Christ in various circumstances, which furnished an

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example to the Catholic school principal: Christ the Teacher, Christ the leader of the Apostles, Christ the Child of the Father, and, of course, Christ the Miracle-worker. I challenged my hearers to merely fit themselves into these four posters, and then they would easily carry out their mission in the ministry of Cahtolic school leadership. "Poster, poster, on the wall. . . which of us is the most Christ like of all", if you will forgive my irreverence.

But, rest assured that I will not take the poster approach today; rather I aim to show you that you are to be inserted in to the Litany of the Saints - just after Mary and Joseph - and in your capacity as and in virtue of your many roles as a Catholic school principal, you will displace at least two-thirds of the Saints who are usually named in the remainder of the Litany. I believe that you truly combine the greatness wnich these many Christian heroes and heroines exemplified by the diversity of their lives.

Or, to use still another analogy, just as a prism takes the pure white light and refracts it into a rainbow of colors, so does the procession of saints who have been proposed for our veneration and, as our examples, break up the pure brilliance of the example of Jesus Christ, and make it appear in its richness and variety by the multitude of ways in which each of these sainted men and women lived their notable lives of virtue and mission.

But, principals are called to be another Christ. As such, their lives and their role are multi-faceted, calling for a multitude of strengths and talents, all to be woven together into a tapestry of a richly productive educational ministry.

Therefore, today's presentation will bring out and hopefully clarify your major tasks as a principal: curriculum, personnel administration, finance, pupil management, public relations, board leadership, and all the others. I believe that the very act of pointing them out will enable you to put them in proper order and priority. At least, I hope so.

For, even without reference to the religious dimension of our ministry, we have a complex part to play, one in which we are pulled and tugged in many directions, all at the same time. Setting priorities, managing one's time, coping with stress appear frequently on the agenda for educational administrators' meetings, as an indication of the pressures which often attract us to our position - make us come back for more each day and each year? (Perhaps at this time of the year, it may be especially dangerous to even pose such a possibility.) But, as in so many aspects of human existence, often our greatest challenges are our largest mode of satisfaction.

As the minutes, hours, and days march on in your life as a principle, your roles are apt to succeed themselves in a dizzy fashion. One moment

you are a teacher, giving a bit of instruction to pupil, parent, or teacher; the next you are playing the art of a financier, then a diplomat engaged in complex negotiations, after that an organizer, then a social worker, often a beggar, rarely a sophisticated executive.

And I go on. I see you as a flaming apostle of all that is good and holy, to be succeeded almost immediately by the role of an ecclesiastical politician. Then you are counsellor and consoler, then a crusader and fiery prophet in every sense of that traditional term, a personnel officer, a Philadelphia lawyer, a policeman, a scholar and philosopher, often a marketing manager, and many times over, a martyr.

Having been a principal - and now a college president - I can tell you that life is a bit easier in some ways up here in "higher education". I am fortunate to have a crew of staff members and vice presidents who divide up all those roles among themselves. But there is one role I find expected of me that I did not meet when I was a principal: a college president is the closet thing in education to being a bishop -- and we have the regalia to go with it. It can fairly weigh one down. The group which planned my inauguration saw fit to substitute a new, lightweight seal of office to be placed around my neck on a slender chain when I was invested - instead of the heavy and rather ponderous insignia which previously had been used. I have been trying to figure out the significance of that change ever since.

And now to the Saints.

In other words, you in the course of a day or week, must show forth the zeal of the great aposle of the Kingdom, St. Paul - the scholarship and brilliance of Thomas Aquinas, the organizing and reforming ability of Teresa of Avila, a feeling for the poor and underprivileged (and the low IQ's) of Elizabeth of Hungary and Martin de Porres, the parochial school leadership talents of Elizabeth Seton who began them all in our country- the devotion of the deacon Lawrence in guarding the riches of the Church - and on ard on.

Hopefully, you will <u>not</u> end as a copy of Joan of Arc and be burned at the stake of misunderstanding and disloyalty, or of St. Cassian, the Roman teacher who slowly died from the weakly-driven pricks of the styluses of his pupils - or, God forbid, of St. Paul whose career (and life) was ended by the stroke of a sword, which can perhaps be more merciful than a sudden firing from one's position.

With pardonable pride, I cite the hall of fame which we Christian Brothers have as our models to emulate. Our founder, St. John Baptist de la Salle, like most Founders, was endowed with charisms for teaching and leading and motivating far above most other mortals. Our two canonized Brothers, Benilde and Miguel, reached their pedestals in vastly different ways; one by being a principal for decades in a tough French mountain village which ultimately became a hotbed of priestly and religious vocations, even though the young locals voiced their displeasure by tossing dead rats through the residence windows while the Brothers were at dinner.

That was Benilde; the other was Miguel of Ecuador, a noted scholar and member of the Spanish Academy whose favorite apostolic task was preparing young ones for First Communion. Our two blesseds are also different: Solomon of Paris was an administrator and therefore visible enough to be hacked to death during the French Revolution, while Mutien of Belgium, not a successful teacher, attained his lofty perch by prefecting a large music practice room in a boarding school, filled with students all practicing different instruments and varying musical pieces simultaneously.

Those of you in other religious communities know your own heroes and the diversity of greatness which they exemplified, many of them perhaps not as yet officially recognized by the Church. And you of the laity have, among at least a few models, the marvelous example of Thomas More, who combined in his person the pratice of administration, scholarship, and martyrdom.

But there are some saints which a Catholic school principal is not -- such as St. Alexis whose charism was to "cop out" and live under the stairs in his parents' home, unrecognized for many years - or St. Anthony in the desert, fasting and battling the powers of evil - or St. Simon Stylites who wanted to get above it all and perched on his pillar, and even St. Francis Xavier and our army of foreign missionaries, who labored among the "heathens and the publicans". Cross them off your list of exemplars for now.

This is enough of an introduction! Let me fulfill the billing of this session and deal as practically as possible with the balancing act which you face each day as many balls must be simultaneously in the air; hopefully indicating how a Catholic school principal is able to proceed calmly and serenely through the maze of his or her day and emerge with brow unfurrowed and not a hair out of place.

A TEACHER

In choosing the role you are to play each day - or each moment, how does a principal decide? Often, it is easy: one merely turns attention to the biggest fire which needs to be put out here and now. But if you had "your druthers", where would you like to turn your attention and keep it here. That's easy for most of us; after all, your full title is "principal teacher", you came from that occupation, and you may feel most comfortable exercising that role. For many of us in educational administration, don't we find curriculum leadership and development the most fun? We enjoy planning and stimulating the learning process, scheming how to open wide the worlds of growth and learning to the students in our schools, shaping the learning process so as to balance the fulfillment of all their needs as they grow, working to unlock the common potential they all possess, together with the special aptitudes of each. Since this is the NCEA convention, I must mention that this means shaping the Vision and Values according to which your teachers carry on the instructional process.

I can think here of a Mother Seton, a Joseph Calasanctius, a John Baptist de la Salle, and many other canonized ones who stood in front of classrooms, planned instructional systems, and wrote valuable pedagogical texts. For them, as for us, our responsiblility for our students is primary. We realize that this is the reason for what we are doing. But teaching can - and often must - be sidetracked. For you are now <u>not</u> a teacher -- you are the principal, unless you are still "lucky" enough to be among that vanishing species, the teaching principal!

All you saintly teachers, pray for us.

LEADER OF TEACHERS

It has been quoted to us that every Catholic school principal religious and lay, in a certain sense is the founder of a new religious order. Their logic for this appears when one considers that such an administrator must form a unified corps of educators whose personal strengths and common vision mold together into a force which can accomplish the mission of the Catholic school. So, you are a Benedict, a Dominic, and Ignatius, a Teresa, an Angela Merici, a Catherine MacCauley, who forged mighty forces of religious educators who evangelized and instructed millions and whose followers still carry on their powerful mission.

It is you, who through the womb-to-tomb process of teacher-selection and hiring, right on through their development and supervision on to

termination or retirement or resignation, who have the most direct and the widest impact on your students. You are the one whose role is to select and influence the instructors who in turn affect the students; yours is a multiplier role, and one that must be given the highest priority. Do not, I beg you, skimp on the time, effort, and skill involved in the selection of new faculty. I have been told, for example, that to become a new teacher in a tenure-track position in a college implies a commitment of $1,000,000 from the college for the lifetime of that teacher. That thought stimulates me to be wary and careful in my share of the faculty-acquisition process at our institution. Be the careful, the visionary, the determined founder of your faculty.

All you apostolic leaders, pray for us!

FINANCIER

How about the shekels that flow through your finger? As one cannot have a school without pupils or teachers, neither can there be one if there are not funds to pay the bills. We are so vulnerable for sloppy accounting that it behooves us to make certain that such is done accurately and promptly - hopefully not by us. Money must come in, it must be recorded, bills must be paid - all as carefully as did Lawrence with the tangible treasures of the early church. Do as he did - or <u>you</u> will be roasted.

We cannot afford, literally, to let money matters be in other than

completely trustworthy hands: tuition collections, fund-raising proceeds, the parish subsidies. If we have a reasonable budget with which to work, good accounts to track it with, and good reports to give to those to whom we are accountable - then we can forget about that aspect of our administration and go on to other matters.

All you careful Mathews, and Lawrences, and other sainted financiers, pray for us!

I venture to say that the above three concerns are the suns which your life revolves: faculty responsibilities, pupil and curriculum concerns, money matters. But a principal's universe is more crowded now than when Sister Principal of the old days could concentrate only on these items. There are many more heavenly patrons and exemplars in our Catholic culture; for others we of the 1980's are on our own.

BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND PARENT ORGANIZATIONS

Did any canonized saint have to deal with a PTA or with a Board. If so, I have not heard of such. Perhaps we can invoke the experience that Paul and Stephen had with the Sanhedrin. Some harried administrators, who are saddled with bumptious boards or refractory parents clubs would say that such an experience should take the place of one of the compulsory miracles required for canonization - they can and do try our virtue.

Yet the nurturing of these organizations, each for its specific purpose, is more important among the responsbilities of a principal today than ever before - in fact many of us can remember the days "BB" - before boards. These groups have done - and are doing such wonders for the survival and the quality of the American Catholic school system that it would be hard to correctly measure or to recognize; but it is a major challenge to a principal to develop them, especially the boards, into a group of wise, apostolic, and committed educational auxiliaries. Parent groups are primarily for communication and assistance, but boards are for policies and direction. Such needs information, guidance, motivation -- all from the principal who may easily be tempted to let this responsibility slide. Do not forget the importance of communication with boards, the effort to form a good agenda, the personal contact with members, the effort to give them formation in the basic tenets of Catholic school philosophy. Do this if only for self-protection or you may be surprised by a sudden hail of stones, as was Stephen.

All you Board leaders, pray for us!

RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHURCH AUTHORITIES AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS

St. Teresa of Jesus, the Carmelite reformer and Doctor of the Church, and the Dominican St. Catherine of Siena are powerful examples of administrators who had interesting and challenging relationships with the Church and religious order authorities of their day. They worked with

them, challenged them, harried them, and prayed for them - all for the good of the Church of Christ. These leaders deserve our loyalty, our respect, our attention, so that, with them, our pastors, our bishops, our diocesan superintendents, our councils and officers of our institution and mold it into the overall mission of the local Church and the far-flung efforts of the religious congregations. Death, taxes - and tensions with such officials are inevitable - but it is up to us to take the time to communicate (that word again!), to charm, to support so that this community of mission is advanced, and all th while - as one of my friends puts it - we are getting all the money and personnel that we can from them.

St. Teresa, St. Catherine, pray for us and our bishops and pastors.

THE LAW

We ministers of the Church have a long and glorious history of tangling with the law. It extends from St. Stephen stoned by the authorities of his time and James beheaded by Herod - through the martyrdom of Peter and Paul and all the other Roman martyrs - to St. Thomas More in the Reformation - through those who perished in the concentration camps of our time and most recently, Fr. jerzy P. Populionsko in Poland.

But we are not to seek that martyrdom by rash actions. St. Teresa and her little brother were rightly intercepted by their uncle as they tripped off to become martyrs in Morrocco.

Rather, we must ordinarily give an example of a law-abiding citizen and educational leader to our faculty, students, and all others in our school community. In other words: Deep out of jail! Be sure of your legal standing, the safety of your students and your staff. And all other requirements of the law, be they reasonable to your mind or not. But is also means that we must exercise our full rights of citzenship, and be a guiding force to impel our adult collaborators and our parents to do likewise. Be the persistent neighbor and contineu to knock on Uncle Sam's door in Washington and in state houses throughout the land for what is our due in the matter in financial assistance to the parents who patronize our schools. Support all local, state, and national efforts for this form of distributive justice, to obtain relief for parents who are paying doubly for the education of their children.

Our saintly fellow citezins, pray for us.

EVALUATION

Sometimes, you must be the Archangel Gabriel, ready to sound the trumpet for judgment. Accountability will be the name of the game at the end of time, and it is just that more and more in the educational world today. With all due allowance for the intangebles involved in our profession and in its results, - all the things of the spriit that are unmeasurable and yet are the object of much of our striving, --

we can and must measure the results that are possible. As educational chefs, we must not just continue to put things into the oven, we must stop and taste them while baking and really sample them when they come out. It is our role to carefully weigh and measure the outcomes of education, to scrutinize and study the effects of our efforts, to utilize the quality indicators available for ourselves, our boards, our faculty, our programs. Time and efforts must be allocated to use them.

St. Michael, Gabriel, Raphaie, pray for us and ur accounting.

MARKETING

Let's go back up to Simon Stylites on his pillar. Part of his reason for this odd maneuver was his desire to preach to the multitudes in order to spread the Word of God. It was a striking kind of marketing for his day, as well as for any day. And I believe that it is St. Francis Xavier who has been chosen as patron of the electronic media because of his success in making converts among the multitudes of heathens which he undertook to evangelize. Here is another marketing triumph for us to emulate in our ministry.

There are practical and theological reasons for us, as leaders of the Catholic school enterprise to be concerned with attracting and retaining students for our schools. Parents are no longer bound by strong conscience ties to the obligation of seeking aCatholic education for their

children, even though the most recent version of Canon Law as promulgated last year clearly states in Canon 798 that parents have the mandate to use Catholic schools whenever available, as the preferred means to fulfill their obligations regarding the Christian upbringing of their children (and the obligation of providing KCatholic schools is also clearly laid upon bishops and pastors). All this being true, it is necessary nevertheless for us to have in place a continual and persuasive campaign to convince the potential users of our schools of the value of our institutions.

So it is necessary to ask if we have given energy and attention and time to a recruiting and public information program - are we another Francis Xavier fired with zeal to make converts for the cause we so deeply believe in? Do we foster recognition and appreciation for our school in our parish, our community - among our parents and among the friends of Catholic education? Do we have a steady output of bulletins, newsletters, news releases, and other public information items? KWe owe this to our publics who are supporting us; we owe it to those who would be brought back into the fold if they only knew the excellence of our product.

All you zealous apostles and missionaries, pray for us.

BE ANOTHER PAUL

To this overwhelmingly female audience, I at this point must mention that I am aware than male saints have predominated, in my remarks, and while I am sorry if this is in any way offensive to you, I feel that you realize that we are all products of the historical conditions which have governed our Church and our society in the past. So, I feel confident that you will accept the capstone model that I propose for you to solve the dilemmas of your many roles and exercise your maginficent mission with style and grace and success: be another Paul of Tarsus.

Paul looms as a giant in our past, as an administrator, as a great teacher, as a charismatic leader, as a caring friend, as a developer of the personnel who were associated with him, as a most effective marketing agent for his message, as a fund-raiser who attained his goal, as an evaluator of results, and above all - as a very hard worker. So - if you are overwhelmed at having to reproduce the entire Litany of the Saints in your life and work, take as your model the Apostle Paul - and you will do very well indeed.

In the lineage of Paul, therefore, plan your administration with concern for your flock - your students and your teachers - as he did with Titus, with Timothy, with Philemon, with the refractory Corinthians. Preach the message of excellence in education and of maral and faith values in season and out of season, as you shape and guide your curriculum. Collect your tuition and funds as diligently as he worked to provide for the poor among the Saints of Jerusalem. Take advantage of the

support and approbation of the leaders of the Church, as we did with Peter and James who were at the relm in Jerusalem. Insist upon our rights to educate in our free socicty and work to obtain our due, as Paul did when he appealed to the Emperor in virtue of his Roman citizenship. Be as diligent in communicating as he was, roaming throughout the Roman world and directing inspirational and pointed messages where he felt it necessary or helpful. His was marketing at its best. He also was concerned with the development of his successors, those who would continue his work in the Churches to which he had given birth and for which he had expended himself so tirelessly. Among the diminishing number of religious in education are still many apt leaders for the Catholic schools of tomorrow and the next day. And among the zealous lay educators in our schools is the potential for the greatness which will carry on the glorious Catholic school tradition. But they must be identified, encouraged, and given the opportunity for training and experience under the wise guidance of today's school leaders.

If we follow St. Paul integrally and are driven by the Spirit as he so powerfully was, our priorities will fall into place, and will do our job with the effectivness for which he has been so noted over 20 centuries.

St. Paul, pray for us.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Continuing to call upon St. Paul as the model of administrative action,

we note that in his letters and in those attributed to him by name, there is often a concluding section of practical advice, specific ways of action to carry out the lofty principles which he had sketched out in the body of his epistle. Likewise, this presentation will conclude with some pragmatic admonitions for balancing the rainbow of roles that you as Catholic school administrators must contend with:

1. Plan your day and your week as well as you can. As an administrator, you are comparatively free to map out the use of your time, not being bound by a rigid class schedule as are your teachers. Write down your daily plan and stick to it as far as is possible - some days you will have checked off everything by noon - and can take a nap! Other days you may be interrupted as you are making the list and are never even able to finish writing it down.
2. Take advantage of the helps available for you to carry out your many roles with wisdom and expertise. These consist of this week's convention for example - and congratulations for being here - or the many NCEA publications which flow from the press, written by practitioners in the field, and intended to assist you in your everyday tasks. Among them, of curse, I am impelled to mention with unpardonable pride the small workbook which I put together a few years ago, to outline the many roles of a

Catholic school principal, it even makes use of the simple device of an asterisk to indicate which activities in each category you are advised to put at the head of your list of Things To Do. I am speaking of The Catholic School Principal: An Outline for Action. (End of one commercial.)

Another help for you, and especially for those who will come after you, are the distinctive programs for training Catholic school administrators which have sprung up across the country. These programs recgnize that our schools are different, especially where it counts - in philosophy, in curriculum, in personnel, in financing, in governance; and it behoves us to take advantage of tried and tested instructional programs which help us develop those differences. (End of another commercial.)

3. Share your administrative burdens by involving your faculty, your parents, your board, and others in the organizing and implementation of the programs of your school. That may sound like a platitude, but I believe that we administrators with noteable zeal, confidence, and the desire to keep from burdening others, nevertheless play the Lone Ranger role to too great a degree. This is general advice - you figure out how to practice it.
4. Seize every possible opportunity to communicate what you and the school have done - what you are doing - and what you hope and plan to do. Since we continue to have the Great Communicator as our nation's president, it speaks to us of the effectiveness

of this talent and its widespread use. The experience of President Reagan indicates to what degree communication serves leadership and skillful administration.

CONCLUSION

The epistle of this speaker to the Saintly Principals and others here present is almost concluded. (We're down to the All you Saints of God,) I hope that you will have been able to bear with my recollections and citations of the saints - they crept into the composition of this talk from 50 years of liturgical celebrations of the saints' days, and from at least two decades of listening to a life of a saint read daily in the dining room in former times: I think I would do quite well in a Saintly Trivial Pursuits game - I remember how self-satisfied I was when I name-dropped St. Leonard of Port Maurice in a family discussion and was challenged by a know-it-all nephew who claimed that such never had lived. I held fast, since I still had vivid recollections of struggling to translate a brief account of his life from French to English as a novitiate exercise. The confident nephew was confounded when he consulted a library copy of the Lives of the Saints.

I am certain also that many other saints have come to your mind as examples of the administrative roles which I have been discussing. I invite you to compose your own version of this address, inserting

the saints you believe are the models for the responsibilities mentioned. It would be fascinating to share and debate over them.

My message has been that the procession of great heroes in the twenty centuries of the history of the Catholic Church can continue to inspire us, and also guide us, the Catholic educational ministers of today. We hope and pray that we share their total Christian commitment, of course, but we may also be helped by the particular facet of the holiness of Christ which each exemplified. They help us as we puzzle over where to put our time and our energy.

Like a snowflake, the situation of every Catholic school principle is unique. Yet each of you is arrayed like the lilies of the field in a glorious coat of many colors, a rainbow of responsibilites and challenges, the likes of which are faced by few others in our modern world. You bridge the gap between America's major industry - education -- and the mission of spreading the word of God, which is the task of the Church. Today's Catholic school principal is, I am confident, producing results worthy of the heroes of past ages, those whom we term our saints - and this in spite of tugs and pressures on every side.

All you Saints of God - all you Catholic School Principals - pray for us.

Alleluia!